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TAGS: [TSPA](#) [PREL](#) [ETTC](#) [KSCA](#) [JA](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: TAIWAN PLANS TO BUILD OWN SATELLITE AND LAUNCH
VEHICLE

REF: A. 05 TAIPEI 03139 B. 05 TAIPEI 03399

Classified By: ADDIR CHARLES BENNETT FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: NSPO Director Lance Wu told AIT that the next goal in Taiwan's satellite program was to build an indigenous satellite and launch vehicle by 2011. The launch vehicle, modeled on the ionosphere sounding rocket Taiwan currently uses, would be for backup in case a U.S. company was unable to launch Taiwan's satellite. END SUMMARY

NEXT STEPS: BUILD SATELLITE AND LAUNCH VEHICLE

¶2. (S) National Space Program Office (NSPO, 170 employees, USD 66 million annual budget) Director Lance Wu met with AIT on June 20 to provide an update on Taiwan's space program. Wu said he was pleased with the first 15 year stage of Taiwan's space program which has seen the successful launch of Formosat-2 (a remote sensing satellite) and Formosat-3 (a weather satellite). In the next 15-year stage, he said, Taiwan's top priority is to build by 2009 a satellite for the German RapidEye AG company's cluster of six satellites. RapidEye AG is already providing information from satellites to aid in cartography, agriculture and disaster surveys. The Taiwan-built satellite will have a resolution of 6.5 meters and be primarily used for land surveys. Wu said NSPO had negotiated a deal with California-based Space-X company to launch the satellite at half the price that a Chinese or Indian launch vehicle would cost. Note: Space-X's first test launch attempt in the Marshall Islands ended in failure. End note.

¶3. (S) Wu said two projects for the Ministry of National Defense (MND) were envisioned. One is to develop a secure communications satellite with Boeing and Northrop. NSPO will submit a proposal to the MND in July. Another MND project is a Formosat-2 follow-on 0.5 meter band-width high-resolution remote sensing satellite known as "One-Eyed Dragon," or "Cyclops". Wu said the EU declined to participate in this project because of potential PRC objections. Under the Cyclops plan, Taiwan would build the ground stations and two U.S. firms would provide commercial imagery to Taiwan. The satellite would be manufactured in the United States. The funding for this project had originally come from the National Science Council and is subject to review by the

Legislative Yuan (LY). Wu confided that the NSPO may try to obtain funding directly from the MND to circumvent LY oversight.

DOMESTICALLY-BUILT LAUNCH VEHICLE

14. (S) Wu explained that the first 100 percent Taiwan-made satellite would be launched in 2011. Wu told AIT that there were also classified plans to design and build a satellite launch vehicle modeled on ionosphere sounding rockets currently in use. Wu said this would be strictly a backup vehicle in case Space-X was not able to launch Taiwan's satellite. Taiwan also has many firms building computer software and hardware and hoped to better market these products. Wu said that NSPO's main contractor for computer hardware and software was the Acer company.

FORMOSAT 2 A BEST SELLER

15. (S) Wu was very pleased with the progress of Taiwan's satellite program, citing both the Formosat-2 and 3 as great successes. The French-built Formosat-2 satellite provides two-meter resolution images and weather information. Formosat-2 operates at an altitude of 900 km and can survey the same area every day. He said the Japanese government had recently purchased a three minute segment of Formosat-2 coverage of the DPRK Taepodong launch site. He also said that the satellite had obtained data on Iran which was being provided to the SPOT website (SPOT is a French firm selling Formosat-2 satellite imagery to international customers). According to Wu, even the PRC had purchased Formosat-2 data through SPOT on Liaoning Province in Northeast China. Wu said that when Taiwan's National Security Council learned of the transaction it banned further sales of imagery to the PRC.

REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE

16. (C) Wu said that Taiwan successfully completed the first stage of its satellite program (1991-2006) with the launching of Formosat-3 in April 2006. However, Wu said that the primary contractor for this project, Orbital Sciences Corporation has not been permitted by the USG to provide flight path control software to Taiwan. The lack of this data forces Taiwan technicians to adjust the orbit of the satellite frequently expending extra fuel and shortening the life of the satellite. Wu said he had spoken to AIT/W about obtaining the data when he was in Washington DC, but his request was denied.

17. (C) COMMENT: While science is still one of the primary motivators for Taiwan's fledgling satellite program, the growing involvement of the MND and the intent to build a domestic launch vehicle indicate that the satellite program will have military uses as well. This could mean that both future development and funding of projects will be less transparent than now. END COMMENT
YOUNG